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THE INNOVATIONS OF LYSANDER THE KITHARIST

Φιλόχορος δ' ἐν γ' Ἀθίδος Λύσανδρος, φησίν, ὁ Σικυώνιος κιθαριστὴς πρῶτος μετέστησε τὴν ψιλοκιθαριστικὴν, μακροὺς τοὺς τόνους ἐντείνας καὶ τὴν φωνὴν εὐογκον ποιήσας, καὶ τὴν ἔναυλον κιθάρισιν ἢ πρῶτοι οἱ περὶ Ἐπίγονον ἐχρήσαντο. καὶ περιελὼν τὴν συντομίαν τὴν ὑπάρχουσαν ἐν τοῖς ψιλοῖς κιθαρισταῖς χρώματά τε εὐχρῶα πρῶτος ἐκιθάρισε καὶ ἰάμβους καὶ μάγαδιν, τὸν καλούμενον συριγμόν· καὶ ὄργανον μετέλαβεν μόνος τῶν πρὸ αὐτοῦ, καὶ τὸ πρᾶγμα αὐξήσας χορὸν περιεστήσατο πρῶτος.

(Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 637–8)

Since Epigonus spent most of his life in Sicyon, it seems likely that Lysander was himself one of the associates of Epigonus that the passage mentions. This would place him in the latter part of the sixth century. But we have no further information about Lysander, and nothing of what is known of Epigonus is any help in the interpretation of the present account.¹ Some innovations in kithara-playing are being credited to Lysander, but what they are is far from clear. *μακροὺς τοὺς τόνους ἐντείνας καὶ τὴν φωνὴν εὐογκον ποιήσας* plainly indicates that he increased the sonority of the instrument, perhaps, as the Loeb translator (Gulick) suggests, by augmenting the size of the sound-box; but the rest of the passage is distressingly mysterious.

I shall not try to elucidate all the difficulties in detail. I shall concentrate on three points, the significance of (a) the expression *ἔναυλον κιθάρισιν*, (b) the sentence *χρώματά τε εὐχρῶα πρῶτος ἐκιθάρισε καὶ ἰάμβους καὶ μάγαδιν, τὸν καλούμενον συριγμόν*, and (c) the phrase *ὄργανον μετέλαβεν*. (I see no good reason to doubt that the text is sound.)

(a) The expression *ἔναυλος κιθάρισις* occurs nowhere else, as far as I know. According to LSJ it means 'kithara-playing accompanied by the aulos'. This is linguistically possible, but difficult in the context, since the subject in hand is explicitly designated as *ψιλοκιθαριστική*, the art of solo performance on the kithara. It is true that elsewhere *ψιλός*, 'bare', is used primarily to distinguish solo instrumental performance from the combination of instrument and voice;² the use of the term *ψιλοκιθαριστική* to admit the combination of kithara and aulos is therefore not ruled out, but it would certainly be unexpected. For this reason Gulick has offered the translation 'giving that flute-like tone to strings...'; but (leaving aside the traditional misrepresentation of the aulos as a 'flute') this is surely impossible. The kithara, no matter how loudly or sonorously it is plucked, remains a plucked instrument, and cannot conceivably reproduce the sustained nasal blare or the lascivious whine of the aulos (a shawm or oboe, not in the least like a flute). What the phrase really means will be considered later.

(b) I must also postpone discussion of the expression *χρώματα εὐχρῶα*. Our understanding of the whole passage will turn on the interpretation of the words *ἰάμβους καὶ μάγαδιν, τὸν καλούμενον συριγμόν*, and these must be considered first. Since *μάγαδις* is the name of an instrument, it has commonly been assumed that these

¹ On Epigonus see Athenaeus 183d, Pollux 4. 59, Aristoxenus, *El. Harm.* 3. 23–4.

² e.g. Plato, *Laws* 669e, Aristotle, *Pol.* 1339b20.

words constitute a list of instruments to which Lysander could turn his hand. The Loeb translator seems to suppose that there are three such instruments mentioned, 'iambi, the magadis, and the syrigma, as it is called'; and he glosses 'syrigma' as 'a kind of whistle'. But the linguistic construction that a list of three demands seems improbable, and Kaibel's treatment of τὸν καλούμενον συριγμόν as being in apposition with μάγαδιν is evidently correct. In that case, however, if a syrigma is a kind of whistle, the μάγαδιν referred to cannot be the stringed instrument usually called by that name.³ It will have to be the rather dubiously authenticated variety of aulos whose claim to the name μάγαδιν is discussed at Athenaeus 634c ff.; but nothing in that passage or elsewhere makes the identification of this μάγαδιν with a συριγμός in the least likely. (Athenaeus' disputants are not even certain that such a μάγαδιν ever existed: note that the passage of Philochorus is not among those cited in their attempts to provide evidence that it did.) Again, what are 'iambi'? They may be any of several things, but ἱάμβος is never used as the name of an instrument. Kaibel therefore suggested the emendation ἱαμβύκην, the name of a little known instrument mentioned at Athenaeus 636b, and by a couple of other later authors.⁴

All this is fairly unsatisfactory, the more so when it is noticed that συριγμός has the unmistakable form of a noun representing an activity. It means, as LSJ says, a whistling or hissing noise; as the name of an instrument it would be a most awkward coinage. If that is correct, and if συριγμόν and μάγαδιν are in apposition, μάγαδιν cannot here refer to an instrument either. ἱάμβους never looked as though it did.

The passages that give the clue, I think, to a proper reading of the paragraph, are tolerably well known, but so far as I am aware have not been connected with it by modern commentators. The first is Pollux 4. 84, which gives the famous description of the *Pythikos nomos*, a piece for solo aulos in five sections or movements. As a whole, the *nomos* represented the battle between Apollo and the Python, and it was evidently highly imitative and expressive. It is relevant to our present concern that the third movement is given the title ἱαμβικόν: this, according to Pollux, was the movement that depicted the sounds of the actual combat. But to suggest, without more evidence, a connection between this occurrence of ἱαμβικόν and ἱάμβους in the present passage would be more than hazardous, not least because the piece described by Pollux is an auletic *nomos* (i.e. a piece for the aulos alone), in which the kithara played no part. A different account of the same *nomos* appears, however, at Strabo 9. 421–2. Describing the early history of the Pythian games, he says προσέθεσαν δὲ τοῖς κιθαρῳδοῖς αὐλητάς τε καὶ κιθαριστὰς χωρὶς ᾠδῆς, ἀποδώσοντάς τι μέλος, ὃ καλεῖται νόμος Πυθικός. He goes on to give the titles of its five movements: his version differs from that of Pollux, and in it the fourth movement is called ἱαμβοὶ καὶ δάκτυλοι, the fifth σύριγγες. Of these the former, he tells us, represents the ἐπιπαιανισμόν following Apollo's victory, the dactylic rhythm being appropriate to hymns of praise (ᾠμοῖς), the iambic to insults (κακισμοῖς). The latter, σύριγγες, represents the death-throes of the monster, as it breathes its last in τινὰς συριγμούς.

I suggest that this repetition of Philochorus' association between ἱαμβοὶ and συριγμοί is unlikely to be a coincidence. It is admittedly not clear from Strabo's account whether the *Pythikos nomos* was played on kithara and aulos together, or sometimes on kithara, sometimes on aulos. In view of Pollux's assertion that it is an

³ For the stringed *magadis* see esp. Athenaeus 634e ff., and cf. Pollux 4. 61.

⁴ Pollux mentions it in a list of stringed instruments, giving no further information. In Hesychius it is not even obvious that a distinct kind of instrument is meant: *iambykai* are described merely as 'instruments to which they sang *iamboi*'.

auletic *nomos*, it seems most likely that it was always performed on a solo instrument, that its original and proper instrument was the aulos, and that its performance on the kithara was a later and derivative innovation. If that is correct, it is a plausible hypothesis that it is precisely this innovation that Philochorus has attributed to Lysander. Alternatively, and perhaps more probably, Philochorus intended no specific reference to the *Pythikos nomos* (if he had, he might have been expected to name it), but only to musical effects of the type from which the last two movements of that *nomos*, on Strabo's account, take their names. Lysander may not have played the *Pythikos nomos* itself, but he recreated on the kithara some of the imitative tricks which this *nomos* had made its speciality.

As to the word *μάγαδιν*, I would argue that the sense is not that Lysander performed on an instrument of that name, but that he produced on the kithara the musical effect most commonly associated with that instrument, as also with the verb *μαγαδίζειν*; that is, the effect of playing or singing in octaves, or of reproducing a tune an octave higher.⁵ As an 'effect' on the kithara it would be created by lightly stopping the strings with the plectrum or the finger-nails, a well-known way of generating harmonics.⁶ This would take the kithara high above its familiar range, and would yield a noticeably thinner tone, quite appropriately described by the term *συριγμός*.⁷ It is true that the noun *μάγαδις* itself seems always to be used elsewhere as the name of an instrument, not that of a musical effect. But we have a clear parallel for the present usage in a passage of Xenophon (*Anabasis* 7. 3. 32–3): *σάλπιγξιν ὠμοβοεῖαις ῥυθμούς τε καὶ οὖν μαγάδι σαλπίζοντες*. Here the general sense of the last phrase must be 'playing the salpinx (trumpet) on high harmonics'; literally 'playing the salpinx as though playing on the magadis'. Todd translates 'playing upon trumpets... music like that of a harp', which has no clear meaning: but Gulick has it right ('flageolet notes') in his version of the passage as quoted by Athenaeus (151e). Athenaeus has the reading *οἶονεῖ μάγαδιν σαλπίζοντες*, which provides an even closer parallel with the account of Lysander: the sense is 'as it were playing the magadis on the salpinx'. Thus though it is the musical effect that is being described, the term *μάγαδις* may still be allowed to retain, at a literal level, its role as designating an instrument. The quotation from Xenophon strongly suggests that *ἐκιδάρισε μάγαδιν*, 'he played the magadis on the kithara', would be a perfectly possible way of saying 'he played the kithara in such a way as to produce notes at the higher octave'.

In view of all this, I see no reason to interpret the expression *χρώματα εὔχροα* as a technical reference to 'chromatic' tunings, or forms of the scale.⁸ What Lysander had done was to make the kithara, for the first time, an instrument capable of 'realistic' imitative effects, in contrast to the usage whereby it merely sounded a tune or an accompaniment without substantial variation of tone-colour. (This more traditional usage is characterized here by the word *συντομία*, literally 'conciseness', but suggesting 'simplicity' or 'plainness' of style.) *χρώματα εὔχροα* are vivid colourings, exemplified in the representation of the battle with the Python. Such colourings may indeed have been associated with the chromatic scale: this is hinted at by the scale's name, though other derivations are canvassed in the ancient sources; but in that case

⁵ For this use of *μαγαδίζειν* see ps.-Aristotle, *Problems* 19. 919a1, 921a30.

⁶ For the technique see e.g. C. Sachs, *The History of Musical Instruments* (London, 1942 and 1977), p. 188, cf. p. 275.

⁷ *μάγαδις* and *συριγμός* are taken in this sense by S. Michaelides, *The Music of Ancient Greece* (London, 1978), p. 196 and pp. 313–4, following Gevaert.

⁸ For analyses of the varieties of chromatic scale see Aristoxenus, *El. Harm.* 50. 25–51. 11.

the origin of the technical name must lie in an earlier non-technical sense of *χρῶμα*, which is common enough, and of which the present phrase gives an example.⁹

Returning now to *ἑναυλος κιθάρισις*, we can see how to allow it to mean 'playing the kithara in the manner of an aulos' without suggesting that the kithara was made to *sound like* an aulos, which it cannot. The aulos was always a highly emotional instrument, capable of a wide range of expressive effects. (Hence, in part, the hostility to it expressed by Plato.) The *Pythikos nomos* was invented for it, and exploited fully its dramatic possibilities. Thus in performing a version of this *nomos* on the kithara, or creating on the solo kithara some of the effects for which that *nomos* was best known, Lysander could fairly be said to have created a form of kitharism that copied, or was like, the playing of the aulos.

(c) Our final question concerned the sense of the phrase *ὄργανον μετέλαβεν*. Gulick translates 'could substitute one instrument for another', and this is almost correct: but it is ambiguous. In view of his apparent belief that the list discussed in (b) is a list of instruments, Gulick probably means that Lysander could play instruments of several kinds, and employ one or another as he thought fit. This, I think, is wrong: what the phrase means is not that he could, but that he did substitute one instrument for another, in the sense that he played on one, the kithara, types of music which had previously been performed only on the aulos, and to which the aulos continued to be thought more appropriate.

These hypotheses receive some support from Athenaeus' next sentence. *Δίωνα δὲ τὸν Χίον τὸ τοῦ Διονύσου σπονδεῖον πρῶτον κιθαρίσαι Μέναιχμος*. Innovations in solo kithara-playing are still the focus of discussion. Here there can be no doubt at all that the novelty consists in the performance on the kithara of music previously (and normally afterwards) performed on the aulos. The sentence says as much almost explicitly, and it is in any case well known that it is the aulos that is the chief instrument both of the music of Dionysus and of the music of *spondeia*, whether Dionysiac or not.¹⁰ It seems a reasonable inference that the innovations credited to Lysander in the preceding lines were of the same order.

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⁹ The forms of expression most frequently associated with chromatic tunings are sweetness and plaintiveness. See e.g. *Anon. Bell.* 26, cf. Aristoxenus, *El. Harm.* 23. 1–24. For *χρῶμα* in the sense 'expressive colouring', see e.g. Plato, *Rep.* 601 b, Antiphanes *ap.* Athenaeus 643 d.

¹⁰ Association of the aulos with Dionysus, e.g. Euripides, *Bacchae* 127–8, 380; with *spondeia* e.g. ps.-Plutarch, *De Mus.* 1135a, Pollux 4. 79, 81; and cf. the terms *σπονδαυλεῖν*, *σπονδαύλης*.